

STATE OF WASHINGTON
INDEPENDENT SCIENCE PANEL

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May 25, 2000

The Honorable Gary Locke
Governor of Washington
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

The Honorable Frank Chopp
Co-Speaker of the House
324 15th Avenue East, Suite 103
Seattle, WA 98112

The Honorable Sid Snyder
Majority Leader of the Senate
PO Box 40482
Olympia, WA 98504-0482

The Honorable Clyde Ballard
Co-Speaker of the House
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Dear Governor Locke, Senator Snyder, and Representatives Chopp and Ballard:

The Independent Science Panel (Panel) was created by the Legislature in 1998 to provide scientific oversight of Washington's salmon, steelhead, and trout recovery efforts. Per RCW 75.46.050, the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office is to request reviews of recovery plans from the Panel. The Panel's review comments are to be provided to the Governor and the Legislature.

In a memo to the Panel dated November 10, 1999, the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office requested Panel review of the 1999 version of the *"Statewide Strategy to Recover Salmon: Extinction is Not an Option-(Strategy)*. This letter and the enclosed review report are being sent to you in fulfillment of that request.

Our review was performed considering the following key questions:

- Are the guiding principles consistent with a scientifically credible conceptual foundation?
- Does the Strategy include clearly defined objectives?
- Are the actions proposed consistent with, and likely to achieve the stated objectives?
- Are proposals based on testable hypotheses for meeting the objectives?
- Does the Strategy include credible methods for assessing progress?

We consider the development of the Strategy an extremely worthwhile and necessary first step toward formulating a comprehensive and cohesive strategic plan focused on salmonid recovery in Washington State. We believe it does a good job of outlining the major elements (with the exception of estuarine environments) that need to be addressed in such a plan, and also serves to identify major problem areas that will require special attention.

As written however, the Strategy does not form an integrated, scientific approach to effectively address the acknowledged causes of decline and achieve the stated goal to *"restore salmon, steelhead, and trout populations to healthy and harvestable levels and improve habitats on which fish rely"*. The current approach appears to be a loose collection of tactics rather than a strategy.

Our major criticisms of the Strategy have focused on the scientific merits of the process proposed for recovering salmonids. This means using the scientific method to reduce uncertainty in efforts to recover salmonids, and to propose actions likely to be effective in achieving stated objectives. Such an approach would be based on identifying and describing what is possible (scientifically and physically feasible in the long-term), attainable (socially feasible), and sustainable. It requires a broad, coordinated strategy, quantifiable recovery objectives, and designs for evaluating success.

For the Strategy to be scientifically credible, it must address and describe at appropriate scales the causes of salmonid declines identified in the document, the overall coordinated strategy and objectives, the methods of evaluating success, and the expected likelihood of success given past performance.

We recognize the extraordinary challenges facing the State and its partners as all strive to recover salmonids in Washington. Never before in the State's history have such challenges occurred on such a large scale. We were acutely aware of that fact as we completed our review.

If any aspects of these comments need clarification we stand ready to assist.

Sincerely,

Kenneth P. Currens, Chair
Independent Science Panel

Enclosure

cc: Senator Rasmussen, Chair, Senate Agriculture and Rural Economic Development Committee
Senator Fraser, Chair, Senate Environmental Quality and Water Resources Committee
Senator Jacobsen, Chair, Senate Natural Resources, Parks, and Recreation Committee
Representatives Chandler and Linville, Co-Chairs, House Agriculture and Ecology Committee
Representatives Buck and Regala, Co-Chairs, House Natural Resources Committee